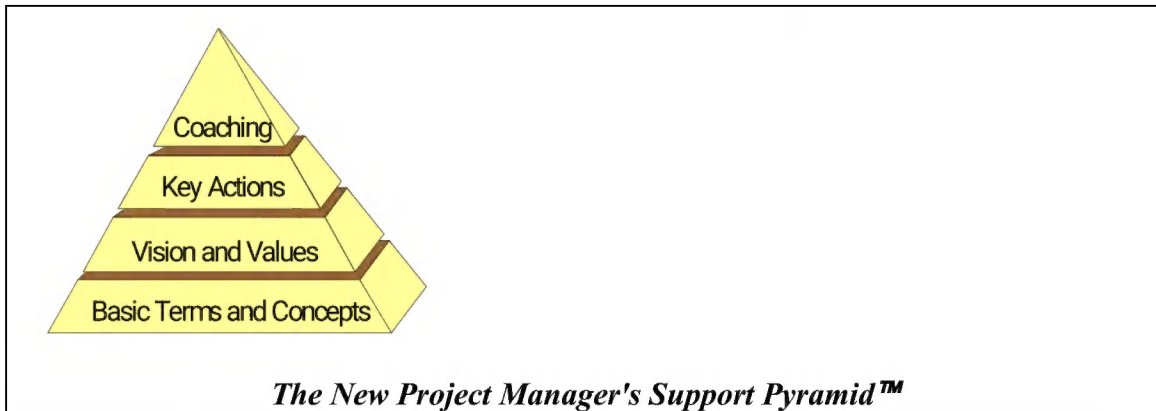

The New Project Manager's Support Pyramid™: A Framework for PM Training & Support



The New Project Manager's Support Pyramid™ identifies four levels of support that should be provided for new project managers to assure that they become effective as quickly as possible.

Basic Terms and Concepts

The foundation level, ***Basic Terms and Concepts***, provides answers to the new manager's questions regarding the "What..." of project management (PM). Here are some (but by no means all) questions that this level addresses:

- What distinguishes ***project*** management from other types of management?
- What is the formal definition of a project? ...milestone? ... project life cycle? ...project stakeholder? ...project resources? ... project scope? ... a project network diagram? ...a work breakdown structure (WBS)
- What distinguishes projects from programs? ...from ongoing operations?
- Which organizational structures support and which can impede PM processes? ... and what should the project manager do to work most effectively within these?
- What are the most useful types of project schedules? ...the Gantt chart? ...the time-scaled network diagram (PERT)? ...milestone charts?
- What are the essential PM "best practices" and how can I begin to implement them?

Vision and Values

The second level of the Support Pyramid, ***Vision and Values***, provides answers to the new project manager's questions about the "Why..." related to PM practices. For example, this level focuses on these kinds of questions:

- Why should project activities be grouped into phases?

- Why is it important to organize project phases into industry-specific project life cycles?
- Why should managers use the essential project management processes (Initiating, Planning, Executing, Controlling, and Closing) throughout all phases of the project?
- Why (and when) should managers include key stakeholders in project planning? ... in project reviews? ... in approving project deliverables?

Key Actions

The third level of the Support Pyramid, **Key Actions**, provides answers to the new project manager's questions about the "How..." of PM. While the first two levels provided a framework of basic knowledge and values, this level provides a **roll-up-your sleeves and get-to-work** focus. Here are some (but not all) questions that this level addresses:

- How do I demonstrate to decision-makers that my project is needed and feasible? ... then get approval to get started?
- How do I analyze and express, as precisely as possible, my project's full scope?
- How do I define and sequence project activities? ... estimate time required to complete them? ... assign resources to them? ... estimate costs of completing them?
- How do I build a work breakdown structure (WBS)?... a network diagram? ... a project schedule?
- How do I build a budget and spending plan? ... a risk management plan?
- How do I make sure project activities are properly executed and controlled?
- How do I close out project activities and **keep my projects on time and within budget?**

Coaching

Finally, the fourth level of the Support Pyramid, **Coaching**, provides the answer to the new project manager's most important question of all:

- Now that I'm trying to apply my new PM skills and tools, am I getting the results I should be getting?

By providing appropriate follow-up coaching, the supervisor of new project managers can help answer this critical question.

The bottom line: We recommend that all new project managers be provided with the levels of support described above so that they become effective as quickly as possible.

Michael Greer's Project Management Resources: Addressing All Levels of the Pyramid

Michael Greer has developed a comprehensive collection of tools and other resources that address all levels of the support pyramid. These resources are *unique in several ways*:

- They are *entirely performance-based*. That is, they are meant to help people acquire specific, observable PM skills (unlike many prose-filled PM texts and talking-head workshops which focus on simply disseminating information).
- They are designed to *meet the needs of new managers*. We assume no management knowledge or experience on the part of participants.
- They are *designed for part-time project managers*. For example, *The Project Manager's Partner*, is designed to be used as an as-needed basis, so each section stands alone.
- Prior to publication, all our materials were *carefully examined by a diverse team of industry reviewers* and then revised based on their feedback. (Names and organizations provided upon request.)

Below is a summary of the resources and how each supports the New Project Manager's Support Pyramid.™



Providing Knowledge of Basic PM Terms and Concepts

There are two sources of support that help new managers with basic PM terms and concepts:

- *The Project Manager's Partner, Part I* provides full explanations and examples of the most common PM terms and concepts. In addition, *Appendix B: Glossary of PM Terms* provides over 100 succinct definitions. Finally, many PM terms are defined in the context of the step-by-step manager activity guides located in the Partner's *Part III: Action Items*.
- *Project Management Basics: A Hands-on Workshop for Today's "Instant" Project Managers* provides an instructor-led introduction to basic PM terms and concepts. Following a media-driven presentation and interactive group discussion, attendees are asked to check their understanding of these basics by completing an extensive quiz.

Providing Project Management Vision and Values



There are two sources of support for helping new managers develop their PM vision and values:

- ***The Project Manager's Partner, Part I*** provides a thorough discussion of the essential PM processes of initiating, planning, executing, controlling, and closing. In addition, it provides a five-phased Generic Project Life Cycle that has its origins in the "best practices" of seasoned PM veterans. The Partner extensively references the Project Management Institute's PMBOK (Project Management Body of Knowledge) in order to assure that the recommendations provided are consistent with the practices of thousands of PM professionals from around the world.
- ***Project Management Basics: A Hands-on Workshop...*** provides an instructor-led introduction to these fundamental PM topics. Small-group activities help assure that the concepts are processed in the context of the students' work environment. In addition, attendees are asked to check their understanding of these topics by completing relevant items on a quiz.



Providing The Ability to Take Action

While it's important to understand terms, concepts, and values, it's even more important to be able to put these to work on the job. Two resources support new managers' performance of Key PM Actions:

- ***The Project Manager's Partner, Part III*** provides 20 succinct Action Items to guide completion of PM chores such as "Develop a Project Schedule," "Estimate Costs," or "Identify Risks and Plan to Respond." Each Action Item includes one or more step-by-step worksheets, as well as brief background information on the topic and cautions to help manager's avoid typical pitfalls. In addition, expert tips are provided under "What a Veteran Project Manager Might Do." Action Items are designed to stand alone so may easily be used out of sequence, as needed on the job.

- ***Project Management Basics: A Hands-on Workshop...*** provides plenty of opportunity for participants to get hands-on experience using the Action Items. In fact, the majority of the time spent in the workshop involves student activities. Working in pairs and small teams to complete case study assignments, students use tools from the *PM Partner* to develop sections of a comprehensive project plan. They then present their results to the group. Through instructor-led debriefing discussions, they get practical tips regarding what works and what doesn't. What's more, by brainstorming with their peers, they develop organization-specific strategies for planning and managing their projects more effectively. (*Optionally, supervisors of new project managers may attend and help guide discussions or provide work samples.*)

Providing Coaching Support



New project managers cannot become 100% effective overnight. They need time to try their new skills and knowledge – to test their limits and figure out where they need help. In particular, they need someone who is prepared to provide them with guidance that reinforces what they learned in the workshop and in the ***Project Manager's Partner***.

- ***The Facilitator's Guide to Follow-up Coaching*** consists of a set of guidelines to be used by the supervisors of new project managers. Designed to stimulate discussion that reinforces the ***PM Basics*** workshop, these guidelines will help supervisors prepare for coaching meetings (or follow-up phone calls) and ask pertinent inspection questions. In this way, they can keep tabs on how their new project managers' first projects are going and discover areas in which the new managers need help. A comprehensive tracking sheet allows the supervisor to track their progress.

For More Information

This document provides only an overview of The New Project Manager's Support Pyramid™ and Michael Greer's PM resources. Please consult the following separate documents for more detailed information:

- ***Summary of Key Project Manager Actions & Results*** (2 pages) – This is a detailed list of 20 Key Actions that project managers should take to effectively plan and manage their projects. For each *Action* shown, specific *Results of Successful Performance* are identified. ***The Project Manager's Partner*** and the ***PM Basics*** workshop are organized according to these Actions and directly support them.

- ***Project Management Basics: A Hands-on Workshop for Today's "Instant" Project Managers*** (6 pages) – This provides a detailed description of the workshop, including an agenda and listing of performance objectives.
- ***The Project Manager's Partner: Detailed Table of Contents*** (2 pages) – This provides a detailed listing of topics from *The PM Partner*.
- ***What the Reviewer's Are Saying About The Project Manager's Partner*** (1 page) – This is a collection of quotes from reviewers of *The Project Manager's Partner*. Manager's from AT&T, Microsoft, The Southern Company, Xerox, and other organizations are represented.

[To obtain copies of these documents or for further discussion, please contact **Michael Greer at (310) 822-3216** or e-mail ***mgreer6062@aol.com*** or visit the ***Project Mgt. Resources web site at <http://members.aol.com/GreersPM/mg-home.htm>***]